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A
D E F E N C E
OF THE
CONSIDERATIONS
ON THE
P R O P R I E T Y
OF REQUIRING A
SUBSCRIPTION to ARTICLES of FAITH.

[Price One Shilling.]

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A
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OF THE
CONSIDERATIONS
ON THE
P R O P R I E T Y
OF REQUIRING A
SUBSCRIPTION to ARTICLES of FAITH.
IN REPLY
TO A LATE ANSWER

From the CLARENDON PRESS.

*By Dr Paley late Professor of
of Cambridge & Fellow of Lincoln
See vol of Sermons*
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DEFENCE

OF THE

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

PROPERTY

OF THE

SUBSCRIPTION TO ARTICLES OF FAITH

IN RELATION

TO A LATE ANSWER

FROM THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



BY A FRIEND OF THE CHURCH

LONDON:

Printed by J. W. in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1848

A

DEFENCE, &c.

THE fair way of conducting a dispute, is to exhibit one by one the arguments of your opponent, and with each argument the precise and specific answer you are able to give it. If this method be not so common, nor found so convenient as might be expected, the reason is, because it suits not always with the designs of a writer, which are no more perhaps than to make a *Book*; to confound some arguments, and keep others out of sight; to leave what is called an *Impression* upon the reader, without any care to inform him of the proofs or principles by which his opinion should be governed. With such views, it may be consistent to dis-

B

patch

patch objections, by observing of some *that they are old*, and therefore like certain drugs have lost, we may suppose, their strength; of others, that *they have long since received an answer*; which implies, to be sure, a confutation: To attack straggling remarks, and decline the main reasoning, as *mere declamation*; to pass by one passage because it is *long-winded*, another because the Answerer *has neither leisure nor inclination to enter into the discussion of it*; to produce extracts and quotations, which taken alone, imperfectly if at all express their author's meaning; to dismiss a stubborn difficulty with a *reference*, which ten to one the reader never looks at: and lastly, in order to give the whole a certain fashionable air of candour and moderation, to make a concession * or two which nobody thanks him for, or yield up a few points which it is no longer any credit to maintain.

How

* Such as, *that if people keep their opinions to themselves, no man will hurt them*, and the like. Answer, p. 45.

How far the writer with whom we have to do is concerned in this description, his readers will judge; he shall receive, however, from us that justice which he has not shewn the author of the *Considerations*, to have his arguments fully and distinctly stated and examined.

After complaining, as is usual on these occasions, of *disappointment* and dissatisfaction; the Answerer sets out with an argument which comprises, we are told, in a *narrow compass*, the whole merits of the question betwixt us; and which is neither more nor less than this, that *it is necessary that those who are to be ordained teachers in the Church should be sound in the faith, and consequently that they should give to those who ordain them some proof and assurance that they are so, and that the method of this proof should be settled by public Authority.*—Now the perfection of this sort of reasoning is, that it comes as well from the mouth of the *Pope's* Professor of Divinity in the University of *Bologna*, as from the *Clarendon* press.

A Church has only with our Author to call her Creed *the faithful word*, and it follows from Scripture that *we must hold it fast*. Her dissatisfied sons, let her only denominate, as he does *, *vain talkers and deceivers*, and St. Paul himself commands us to *stop their mouths*. Every one that questions or opposes her decisions she pronounces, with him, a heretic, and *a man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject*. In like manner, calling her tenets *sound doctrine*, or taking it for granted that they are so (which the Conclave at Rome can do as well as the Convocation at London) and *soundness in the faith being a necessary qualification in a Christian Teacher*, there is no avoiding the conclusion, that every *Christian Teacher* (in, and out of the Church too, if you can catch him, *soundness in the faith* being alike *necessary* in all) must have these tenets strapped about his neck by Oaths and Subscriptions. An argument which thus fights in any cause, or on either side, deserves

deserves no quarter.—I have said that this reasoning, and these applications of Scripture are equally competent to the defenders of *Popery*—they are more so. The Popes, when they assumed the power of the Apostles, laid claim also to their infallibility ; and in this they were consistent. Protestant Churches renounce with all their might this infallibility, whilst they apply to themselves every expression that describes it, and will not part with a jot of the Authority which is built upon it.—But to return to the terms of the argument. *Is it necessary that a Christian Teacher should be found in the faith ?*

1. Not in nine instances out of ten to which the Test is now extended.
Nor

2. If it were, is this the way to make him so ; there being as little probability that the determinations of a set of men whose good fortune had advanced them to high stations in the Church

Church should be right, as the conclusions of private enquirers. Nor

3. Were they actually right, is it possible to conceive how they can, upon this author's principles, produce the effect contended for. Since *we set them not up * as a rule of faith; since they do not decide matters for us, nor bind them upon us; since they tie no man up from altering his opinion, are no ways inconsistent with the right of private judgment, are in a word, of no more authority than an old Sermon; nor consequently much more effectual, either for the producing or securing of soundness in the faith.*

The Answerer not trusting altogether to the strength of his *argument*, endeavours next to avail himself of a *concession* which he has gained, he imagines, from his adversary, and which he is pleased to look upon *as in a manner giving up the main point*. Our business, therefore, will

* P. 10, 11, 13, 29.

will be to shew what this concession, as he calls it, amounts to, and wherein it differs from the *main point*, the requisition of Subscription to established formularies. It is objected to the Articles of the Church of England, that they are at variance with the actual opinions both of the Governors and Members of that Church; so much so, that the men who most faithfully and explicitly maintain these Articles, get persecuted for their singularity, excluded from Orders, driven from Universities, and are compelled to preach the established religion, in fields and conventicles.—Now this objection, which must cleave to every *fixed* formulary, might, we conceive, be removed if a Test was substituted, supposing any Test to be insisted upon, which could adapt itself to the opinions, and keep pace with the improvements, of each succeeding age. This, in some measure, would be the case if the Governors of the Church for the time being, were authorised to receive from Candidates for orders de-

clarations of their religious principles in their own words, and allowed, at their discretion, to admit them into the Ministry. Bishops being taken out of the lump of the community will generally be of the same leaven, and partake, both of the opinions and moderation of the times they live in.—This is the most that can be made of the concession, and how this gives up the *main point*, or indeed any thing, it is not easy to discover.

The next paragraph of the Answer attacks the account which the *Considerations* have given of the *rise and progress* of the custom in question, *the reverse of which* the Answerer tell us *is the truth*, and by way of proof gives his own account of the matter, which, so far from being the *reverse*, is in effect, or very nearly, the same.

The reader shall see the two accounts side by side, and is desired to judge whether the Author of the *Considerations*,

tions, so far from being confuted in this point, is even contradicted.

“ The protestants, aware how greatly they were misrepresented and abused, began to think it necessary to repell the various calumnies that had been cast upon them, by setting forth some public Constitutions or Confessions, as a declaration of their faith and worship. And to make such declaration still more authentic, they likewise engaged themselves in a mutual bond of conformity to all these Constitutions.” Considerations, page 6.

“ As some who set up for reformers, had broached many erroneous and pestilent doctrines; the *Lutherans* first, and, after their example, other protestant Churches, thought fit to draw up Confessions of Faith. And this they did, partly to acquit themselves of the scandal of abetting wild and seditious enthusiasts, and declaring what were their real doctrines: partly (observe how tenderly this is introduced) to prevent such enthusiasts on the one hand, and popish emissaries on the other, from intruding themselves into the ministry.” Answer, page 6, 7.

Now were the *origin* of a custom of more consequence than it is to a question concerning the *propriety* of it, can any

one doubt who credits even the Answerer's own account, but that the motive assigned in the Considerations both did exist, and was the principal motive. There is one account, indeed, of the *origin* of this custom which, were it true, would directly concern the question. *This practice*, our Author tells us in another part of his Answer *, *is said to be derived from the Apostles themselves.* I care not what *is said*.—It is impossible that the practice complained of, the imposition of articles of faith by *fallible* men, could originate from the *Apostles*, who, under the direction by which they acted, were *infallible* †.

But

* Page 19.

† How a Creed is to be made, as the Considerations recommend, in which all parties shall agree, our Author cannot understand. I will tell him how; by adhering to scripture terms: and this will suit the best idea of a Creed (a summary or compendium of a larger volume) and the only fair purpose of one, *instruction*.

It is observed in the Considerations, that the multiplicity of the propositions contained in the

But this practice, from whatever *root of bitterness* it sprung, has been one of the chief causes, we assert, of the divisions and distresses which we read of in ecclesiastical history. The matter of fact our Author does not, because he cannot, deny. He rather chuses to insinuate that *such divisions and disturbances were not owing to the governors of the Church, but to the perverse disputings of Heretics* and

39 Articles is alone sufficient to shew the impossibility of that consent which the Church supposes and requires.—Now, what would any man guess is the answer to this? Why, *that there are no less than three propositions in the very first verse of St. John's Gospel.* Had there been *three thousand* it would have been nothing to the purpose: Where propositions are received upon the Authority of the proposer, it matters not how many of them there are; the doubt is not increased with the number; the same reason which establishes one establishes all. But is this the case with a system of propositions which derives no evidence from the proposer? which must each stand upon its own separate and intrinsic proof? —We thought it necessary to oppose note to note in the place in which we found it, though neither here nor in the Answer is it much connected with the Text.

and Schismatics.—He *must* know, that there is oppression as well as resistance, provocation as well as resentment, abuse of power as well as opposition to it; and it is too much to take for granted, without one syllable of proof, that those in possession of power have been always in the right, and those who withstood them in the wrong. *Divisions* and *disturbances* have in fact, and in all ages, arisen on this account, and it is a poor shift to say, because it may always be said, that such only are chargeable with these mischiefs as refused to submit to whatever their superiors thought proper to impose *.

Nor

* The following sentiment of our Author's is too curious to be omitted; "*Possibly too he (the Author of the Considerations) may think that insurrections and rebellions in the state are not owing to the unruliness of factious subjects, but to Kings and Rulers; but most reasonable men, I believe, will think otherwise.*"—A common reader may think this observation of the Answerer a little beside the question. But the Answerer may say, with *Cicero* and *Dr. King*, "*Suscepto negotio, majus mihi quiddam pro-*

Nor is it much better what he tells us, *that these subtilties of metaphysical debate, which we complain of in our Articles, were introduced by the several heretics of those times*; especially as it is evident that whoever first introduced, it is the *Governors of the Church* who still continue them.

But our Author cannot conceive what all this, as relating to *Creeds* only and *Confessions*; to the *terms of communion*, rather than of admission into the Ministry, is to the purpose. Will he then give up *Creeds* and *Confessions*? or will his Church thank him for it if he does? —a Church which, by transfusing the substance of her Articles into the form of her public worship, has in effect made the *terms of communion* and of admission into the Ministry the same.— This question, like every other, however naked you may strip it by abstraction, must

propofui, in quo meam in Rempublicam voluntatem populus perspicere posset.”—Motto to Dr. K.’s Oration in 1749.

must always be considered with a reference to the practice you wish to reform.

The Author of the Considerations contends very properly that it is one of the first duties a Christian owes to his Master *to keep his mind open and unbiassed* in religious enquiries. Can a man be said to do this, who must bring himself to assent to opinions proposed by another? Who enters into a profession where both his subsistence and success depend upon his continuance in a particular persuasion? In answer to this we are informed, that these Articles are no *Rule of Faith* (what not to those who subscribe them?) that *the Church deprives no man of his right of private judgement* (she cannot—she hangs however a dead weight upon it); that it is a *very unfair state of the case to call Subscription a declaration of our full and final persuasion in matters of faith*; though if it be not a *full* persuasion, what is it? and ten to one it will be *final*, when such consequences attend a change.—That, *no man*

is

is hereby tied up from impartially examining the word of God, i. e. with the impartiality of a Man who must eat or starve, according as the examination turns out; an impartiality so suspected, that a Court of Justice would not receive his evidence under half of the same influence;—nor from altering his opinion if he finds reason so to do; which few, I conceive, will find, when the alteration must cost them so dear. If one could give credit to our Author in what he says here, and in some other passages of his Answer, one would suppose that, in his judgement at least, Subscription restrained no man from adopting what opinion he pleased, provided *he does not think himself bound openly to maintain it; that men may retain their preferments, if they will but keep their opinions to themselves.*—If this be what the Church of England means, let her say so.—This is indeed what our Author admits here, and yet from the outcry he has afterwards raised against all who continue in the Church whilst they dissent from her Articles, one would
not

not suppose there was a pardon left for those, who *keep even to themselves an opinion* inconsistent with any one proposition they have subscribed. The fact is, the Gentleman has either shifted his opinion in the course of writing the Answer, or had put down these assertions, not expecting that he should have occasion afterwards to contradict them.

It seemed to add strength to this objection that the judgement of most thinking men being in a progressive state, their opinions of course must many of them change; the evil and iniquity of which the Answerer sets forth with great pleasantry, but has forgot at the same time to give us any remedy for the misfortune; except the Old woman's receipt to leave off thinking, for fear of thinking wrong.

But our Church *preaches*, it seems, *no other Gospel than that which she received, nor propounds any other articles for Gospel, nor fixes any standards or criterions of faith,*

faith, separate from this Gospel; and so she herself fully declares; and we are to take her word for it, when the very complaint is, that she has never acted up to this declaration, but in direct contradiction to it.—When she puts forth a system of propositions conceived in a new dialect, and in unscriptural terms; when she ascribes to these the same evidence and certainty as to Scripture itself, or decrees and acts as if they were equally evident and certain, she incurs, we apprehend, the charge which these expressions imply.—She claims indeed Authority in controversies of faith, but only so far, says her Apologist, as to judge for herself what shall be her own terms of communion, and what qualifications she shall require in her own ministers. All which, in plainer English, comes to this; that two or three men betwixt two and three centuries ago, fixed a multitude of obscure and dubious propositions, which many millions after must bring themselves to believe, before they be permitted to share in the provision which the State has made (and to

D

which

which all of every sect contribute) for regular opportunities of public worship, and the giving and receiving of public instruction. And this our Author calls the Magistrate's *judging for himself* *, and exercising the *same right as all other persons have to judge for themselves*. For the reasonableness of it however he has nothing to offer, but that it is *no more than what other Churches, Popish too, to strengthen the argument, as well as Protestant, have done before*. He might have added, seeing *custom* is to determine the matter, that it has been *customary* too from early ages for Christians to anathematise and burn each other for difference of opinion in some points of faith, and for difference of practice in some points of ceremony.

We now accompany the learned Answerer to what he is pleased to call the *main question*, and which he is so much *puzzled to keep in sight*. The argument

* P. 26.

ment * in favour of Subscription, and the arbitrary exclusion of men from the Church or Ministry, drawn from the nature of a society and the rights incidental to society, our Author resigns to its fate, and to the answer which has been given it in the Considerations. He contends only, that the conduct of the Apostles in admitting the *Eunuch* and the *Centurion* upon a general profession of their faith in Christ, *has nothing to do with the case of Subscription*, as they were admitted, not into the Ministry, but only the communion of the Church. Now, in the first place, suppose the *Eunuch* or *Centurion* had taken upon them, as probably they did, to teach Christianity, would they have been inhibited by the Apostles as not having given sufficient *proof or assurance of their soundness in the faith*? And if not, what becomes of the necessity of such *assu-*

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rances

* What would any man in his wits think of this argument, if upon the strength of it they were to make a law, that none but red haired people should be admitted into orders, or even into churches?

rances from a Christian teacher ? In the second place, suppose you consider the Church as one society, and its teachers as another, is it probable that these who were so tender in keeping any one out of the first, would have thought the argument we were encountering, or any thing else, a pretence for a right of arbitrary exclusion from the latter ? The case of *Cornelius*, says our Author, is *extraordinary*; while *St. Peter* was preaching to him, the *Holy Ghost* fell upon all them which heard the word. And is not this Author ashamed to own, that any are excluded from the communion, or even ministry, of the Church, who would have been entitled by their faith to the Gifts of the *Holy Ghost* ?

The Answerer in the next paragraph acknowledges, that to admit converts into the Church upon this one Article of faith, that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, was indeed the practice of the Apostles *; but

* Although the question, whether to believe that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, be not the only necessary article

but then he tells us, what must sound a little odd to a Christian ear, and comes the more awkwardly from this Author, whom if you turn over a page, you will find quoting the *practice of the Apostles* with a vengeance: he tells us, I say, *that no argument can be drawn from the practice of the Apostles* *. Now with regard to the *practice of the Apostles*, and the application of it to ourselves, the case seems to be this (the very reverse, observe, of our Author's rule) that we are always bound not to go beyond the precedent,

* P. 16.

article of faith, is a question in which we have no concern; our Author, with the best inclination in the world, not being able to fix such an opinion upon us. Yet I cannot help observing, that he has put two of the oddest constructions upon the terms of the proposition that ever entered into the fancy of man to conceive. One is, which you may be sure he intends for his adversaries †, *that it is necessary to believe Jesus to be a true prophet, yet not necessary to believe one doctrine that he has taught*. The other, which he means for himself, is that *by the Messiah we are to understand the only begotten Son of God anointed and sent by the Father to make propitiation for the sins of the whole world*,

† P. 16.

cedent, though for want of the same authority, we may not always *advance up to it*.—It surely at least becomes us to be cautious of *proceeding*, where they in the plenitude of their commission thought proper to *stop*.

It is alledged in the Considerations, that annexing emoluments to the profession of particular opinions is a strong and dangerous inducement to prevarication; and the danger is the greater, as prevarication in one instance has a tendency to relax the most sacred obligations, and make way for perfidy in every other. But *this*, it seems, *has nothing to do with the question* *. Why, it is the *very* question, Whether the magistrate ought to confine the provision he makes for religion to those who assent, or declare their assent, to a particular system of controverted divinity; and this is one direct objection against it. But *must the magistrate then*, exclaims our alarmed adversary, *establish no tythes, no rich benefices, no dignities, or Bishopricks?*

* P. 19, 20.

ricks? As many as he pleases, only let him not convert them into snares and traps by idle and unnecessary conditions. *But must he admit all persons indiscriminately to these advantages?* The Author of the Considerations has told him, that he may require conformity to the Liturgy, Rites and Offices he shall prescribe: he may trust his officers with a discretion as to the religious principles of candidates for orders, similar to what they now exercise with regard to their qualifications; he may censure extravagant preaching when it *appears*; precautions surely sufficient either to keep the *wildest sectaries* out of the Church, or prevent their doing any mischief if they get in. The exclusion of Papists is a separate consideration. The Laws against Popery, as far as they are justifiable, proceed upon principles with which the Author of the Considerations has nothing to do. Where, from the particular circumstances of a country, attachments and dispositions hostile and dangerous to the state, are accidentally

or

or otherwise connected with certain opinions in religion, it may be necessary to lay incumbrances and restraints upon the profession, or propagation of such opinions. Where *a great part* of any sect or religious order of men are enemies to the constitution, and you have no way of distinguishing those who are not so, it is right, perhaps, to fence the *whole* order out of your civil and religious establishment: it is the right at least of self-defence, and of extreme necessity. But even this is not on account of the religious opinions themselves, but as they are probable marks, and the only marks you have, of designs and principles which it is necessary to disarm. I would observe, however, that in proportion as this connection between the civil and religious principles of the Papists is dissolved, in the same proportion ought the state to mitigate the hardships and relax the restraints to which they are made subject.

If

If we complain of *severities*, of *pains* and *penalties*, the Answerer cannot discover *whom or what we mean*: and lest his Reader should, by a figure extremely well known in the craft of controversy, he proposes a string of questions in the person of his adversary, to which he gives his own peremptory and definitive NO *. We will take a method, not altogether so compendious, but, we trust, somewhat more satisfactory. We will repeat the same questions, and let the Church and State answer for themselves. First then,

Does our Church or our Government inflict any corporal punishment, or levy any fines or penalties on those who will not comply with the Terms of her Communion?

—“ BE IT ENACTED, that all and
 “ every person or persons that shall ne-
 “ glect or refuse—to receive the Sacra-
 “ ment of the Lord’s Supper according
 “ to the usage of the Church of England,
 E “ and

“ and yet, after such neglect or refusal,
 “ shall execute any office or offices, civil
 “ or military, after the times be expired
 “ wherein he or they ought to have taken
 “ the same, shall, upon conviction thereof,
 “ besides the loss of the office, forfeit the
 “ sum of five hundred pounds *.” Stat.
 25 Car. II. c. 2. Now, although starv-
 ing be no *corporal Punishment*, nor the
 loss of all a man has a *Fine*, or *Penalty*,
 yet depriving men of the common bene-
 fits of society, and rights even of lay
 subjects, because *they will not comply with
 the terms of Church Communion*, is a
severity that might have deserved from
 our Author some other Apology besides
 the mere suppression of the fact.

2. *Doth it deny them the right or pri-
 vilege of worshipping God in their own
 way?*—“ WHOEVER shall take upon
 “ him to preach or teach in any meeting,
 “ assembly

* This and the Corporation Act an otherwise
 excellent person calls the Laws which secure both
 our civil and religious *Liberties*. Blackstone's
 Comm. Vol. iv. p. 432.

“ assembly or conventicle, and shall thereof
 “ be convicted, shall forfeit for the first
 “ offence twenty pounds, and for every
 “ other offence forty pounds.” Stat. 22
 Car. II. cap. 1.—“ No person shall presume
 “ to consecrate or administer the Sacrament
 “ of the Lord’s Supper before he be or-
 “ dained Priest, after the manner of the
 “ Church of England, on pain of forfeit-
 “ ing one hundred pounds for every such
 “ offence.” Stat. 13 & 14 Car. II. c. 4.
 —These laws are in full force against all
 who do not subscribe the 39 Articles of the
 Church of England, except the 34th, 35th,
 and 36th, and part of the 20th Article.

3. *Are men denied the liberty of free
 debate?*—“ IF ANY PERSON having
 “ been educated in, or at any time having
 “ made profession of the Christian faith
 “ within the realm, shall by writing,
 “ printing, teaching, or advised speaking,
 “ deny any one of the persons of the holy
 “ Trinity to be God—he shall for the first
 “ offence be disabled to hold any office or
 “ employment, or any profit appertaining
 E 2 “ thereto;

“ thereto ; for the second offence shall be
 “ disabled to prosecute any action or in-
 “ formation in any court of law or equity,
 “ or to be guardian of any child, or exe-
 “ cutor or administrator of any person, or
 “ capable of any legacy, or deed of gift,
 “ or to bear any office for ever within this
 “ realm, and shall also suffer imprison-
 “ ment for the space of three years from
 “ the time of such conviction.” Stat. 9
 & 10 Will. III. c. 32.

It has been thought to detract considerable-
 ly from the pretended use of these
 Subscriptions, that they excluded none
 but the conscientious ; a species of men
 more wanted, we conceive, than for-
 midable to any religious establishment.
 This objection applies equally, says our
 Answerer *, to the *Oaths of Allegiance
 and Supremacy* ; and so far as it does
 apply, it ought to be attended to ; and
 the truth is, these *Oaths* might in many
 instances be spared without either danger
 or detriment to the community. There
 is, however, an essential difference be-
 tween

* Page 22.

tween the two cases; a scruple concerning the *Oath of Allegiance* implies principles which may excite to acts of hostility against the State, a scruple about the truth of the *Articles* implies no such thing *.

Our Author, good man, is well persuaded, that the generality of the Clergy, when they offer themselves for ordination, consider seriously what office they take upon them, and firmly believe what they subscribe to. I am persuaded much otherwise. But as this is a *Fact*, the Reader, if he be wise, will neither take the Answerer's word for it nor mine: but form his own judgment from his own observation. Bishop *Burnet* complained above 60 years ago, that *the greater part*, even then, *subscribed the Articles without ever examining them* †, and others did it because

* The Answerer might have found a parallel below in some other Oaths, which he does not care to speak of, viz. the Case of College Statutes, page 34 of the Considerations.

† *Burnet's Hist. of his Own Times. Conclusion.*

because they must do it. Is it probable, that in point either of seriousness or orthodoxy the Clergy are much mended since?

The Pleas offered in support of this practice of Subscription come next to be considered. "One of these is drawn from the sacred writings being capable of such a variety of senses, that men of widely different persuasions shelter themselves under the same forms of expression." Our Author, after quarrelling with this representation of the plea, gives his readers in its stead a long quotation from the *Archdeacon of Oxford's Charge**. —What he is to gain by the change, or the quotation, I cannot perceive, as the same 1st Query still recurs, "Is it true that the Scriptures are in reality so differently interpreted in points of real consequence?" In answer to which, the *Archdeacon of Oxford*, we are told, has
shewn

* See this whole Charge answered in the *London Chronicle* by *Priscilla*.—The Lord hath sold *Sisera* into the hand of a *Woman*!

shewn that points of real consequence are differently interpreted, and the plainest texts explained away, and has instanced—in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel.

—The plea we conceive is not much indebted to the *Archdeacon of Oxford*.—

But be these Scriptures interpreted as they will, each man has still a right to interpret them for himself. The Church of *Rome*, who always pushed her conclusions with a courage and consistency unknown to the timid patrons of Protestant Imposition, saw immediately that as the Laity had no right to interpret the Scriptures, they could have no occasion to read them, and therefore very properly locked them up from the intrusion of popular curiosity. Our Author cites the abovementioned Query from the Considerations as the *first* Query which would lead his Reader to expect a *second*. The Reader, however, may seek that *second* for himself, the Answerer is not obliged to produce it — It stands thus. Suppose the Scriptures thus variously interpreted, does Subscription mend the matter?—The

Reader

Reader too is left to find an answer for himself.

The next, the strongest, the only tolerable plea for Subscription is, *that all sorts of pestilent heresies might be taught from the pulpit, if no such restraint as this was laid upon the Preacher* *. How far it is probable that this would be the consequence of removing Subscription, and by what other means it might be guarded against, has been hinted already, and will again be considered in another place. We will here only take notice of one particular expedient suggested in the Considerations, and which has often indeed elsewhere been proposed, namely, "that the Church, instead of requiring Subscription before-hand to the present, or to any other Articles of faith, might censure her Clergy afterwards, if they opposed or vilified them in their preaching."—The advantage of which scheme above the present is manifest, if it was only for this reason, that you distress and

* Page 26.

and corrupt thousands now, for one that you would ever have occasion to punish. Our Author nevertheless is *humbly of opinion that it is much better to take proper precautions beforehand*: he must, with all his *humility*, know that when it has been proposed to take proper precautions of the *Press*, by subjecting authors to an *imprimatur* before publication, instead of punishment *after* it; the proposal has been resented as an open attack upon the rights and interests of mankind. The common sense and spirit of the nation could see and feel this distinction, and the importance of it, in the case of publishers; and why preachers should be left in a worse situation it is not very easy to say?

The example of the *Arminian* confession is, upon this occasion, recommended by the Author of the Considerations; a confession which was compiled for the edification and instruction of the members of that church, without peremptorily insisting upon any one's *assent*

to it. But it is the misfortune of the *Arminian* to be no national church—the misfortune, alas ! of Christianity herself in her purest period ; when she was under the government of the Apostles ; without *alliance* with the states of this world ; when she composed nevertheless a church as real, we conceive, and as respectable, as any *national* church that has existed since.

Our Author, who can much sooner make a distinction than see one, does not comprehend, it seems, any difference between Confessions of faith and *preaching*, as to the use of unscriptural terms. Did a Preacher, when he had finished his sermon, call upon his congregation to subscribe their names and assent to it, or never to come more within the doors of his church ; there would indeed be some sort of resemblance betwixt the two cases ; but as the hearers are at liberty to believe their preacher or no, as they see, or he produces reasons, for what he says ; there can be no harm,
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and there is a manifest utility, in trusting him with the liberty of explaining his own meaning in his own terms.

We now come, and with the tenderest regret, to the case of those who continue in the Church without being able to reconcile to their belief every proposition imposed upon them by Subscription; over whose distress our Author is pleased to indulge a wanton and ungenerous triumph. They had presumed, it seems, that it was some apology for their conduct, that they sincerely laboured to render to religion their best services, and thought their present stations the fairest opportunities of performing it.—This may not, perhaps, amount to a complete vindication; it certainly does not fully satisfy even their own scruples; else where would be the cause of complaint? What need of relief, or what reason for their petitions? It might have been enough, however, to have exempted them from being absurdly and indecently compared with faithless *hypocrites*, with *Papists*, and *Jesuits*, who, for other purposes,

poses, and with even opposite designs, are supposed to creep into the Church through the same door. For the fullest and fairest representation of their case, I refer our Author to the excellent *Hoadly*; or as *Hoadly* possibly may be no book in our Author's library, will it provoke his *raillery* to ask, what he thinks might be the consequence, if all were at once to withdraw themselves from the Church who are dissatisfied with her doctrines? Might not the Church lose, what she can ill spare, the service of many able and industrious ministers? Would those, she retained, be such as acquiesced in her decisions from enquiry and conviction? Would not many or most of them, be those, who keep out of the way of religious scruples by lives of *Secularity* and Voluptuousness? by mixing with the crowd, in the most eager of their pursuits after pleasure or advantage?—One word with the Answerer before we part upon this head.—Whence all this great inquisitiveness, this solicitude to be acquainted with the person, the opinions, and associates of his

his adversary? Whence that impertinent wish, that he had been *more explicit in particular with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity?* Is it out of a pious desire to fasten some heresy, or the imputation of it, upon him? Is he *called out of the Clouds* to be committed to the Flames *?

The 40th page of the Answer introduces a paragraph of considerable length, the sum however and substance of which is this—that if Subscription to Articles
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* We were unwilling to decline the defence of the persons here described, though the expression in the Considerations which brought on the attack, manifestly related to a different subject. The Author of the Considerations speaks of *being bound to keep up* these forms until relieved by proper Authority; of *ministerially* complying with what we are not able to remove: alluding, no doubt, to the case of *Church Governors*, who are the instruments of imposing a Subscription which they may disapprove. But the Answerer, taking it for granted, that *ministerially* complying meant the *compliance of ministers*, i. e. of clergymen officiating in their Functions, has, by a quibble, or a blunder, transferred the passage to a sense for which it was not intended.

of faith were removed, confusion would ensue; the people would be distracted with the disputes of their teachers, and the pulpits filled with controversy and contradiction.—Upon this *Fact* we join issue, and the more readily as this is a sort of reasoning we all understand.—The extent of the Legiflator's right may be an abstruse enquiry, but whether a Law does more good or harm, is a plain question which every man can ask. Now, that distressing many of the Clergy, and corrupting others;—that keeping out of Churches, good Christians and faithful citizens;—that making parties in the State, by giving occasion to Sects and separations in Religion;—that these are inconveniences, no man in his senses will deny. The question therefore is, What advantage do you find in the opposite scale to balance these inconveniencies? The simple advantage pretended is, that you hereby prevent *wrangling* and contention in the Pulpit. Now, in the first place, I observe that allowing this evil to be as grievous and as certain as you please,

please, the most that can be necessary for the prevention of it is, to enjoin your Preachers as to such points Silence and Neutrality. In the next place, I am convinced, that the danger is greatly magnified. We hear little of these points at present in our Churches and public teaching, and it is not probable that leaving them at large would elevate them into more importance, or make it more worth mens' while to quarrel about them. —They would sleep in the same grave with many other questions, of equal importance with themselves, or sink back into their proper place, into topics of speculation, or matters of debate from the Press. None but men of some Reflection would be forward to engage in such subjects, and the least reflection would teach a man that *Preaching* is not the proper vehicle of Controversy :— Even at present, says our Author, *we speak and write what we please with impunity*; and where is the mischief? or what worse could ensue if Subscription were removed?—Nor can I discover

any thing in the disposition of the petitioning Clergy that need alarm our apprehensions. If they are impatient under the Yoke, it is not from a desire to hold forth their opinions to their congregations, but that they may be at liberty to entertain them themselves without offence to their consciences, or ruin to their fortunes.

Our Author has added, by way of *make-weight*, to his argument, *that many common Christians, he believes, would be greatly scandalized if you take away their Creeds and Catechisms, and strike out of the Liturgy such things as they have always esteemed essential* *. Whatever reason there may be for this *belief* at present, there certainly was much greater at the Reformation, as the Popish ritual which was then *taken away*, had a fascination and antiquity which ours cannot pretend to. Many were probably *scandalized* at parting with their Beads and their Mass-Books, that lived afterwards to thank

* P. 42-41.

thank those who taught them better things. Reflection we hope in some, and Time we are sure in all, will reconcile men to alterations established in reason. If there be any danger, it is from some of the Clergy, who with the Answerer would rather suffer the *vineyard* to be overgrown with *weeds*, than *stir the ground*, or what is worse, call these weeds *the fairest flowers in the garden*. Such might be ready enough to raise a hue and cry against all innovators in religion, as *overturers of churches* and *spoilers of temples*.

But the cause, which of all others stood most in the way of the late petitions for relief, was an apprehension that religious institutions cannot be disturbed without awakening animosities and dissensions in the state, of which no man knows the consequence. Touch but Religion, we are told, and it bursts forth into a flame. Civil distractions may be composed by fortitude and perseverance, but neither Reason nor Authority can controul, there

is neither charm nor drug, which will assuage, the passions of mankind when called forth in the cause, and to the battles of Religion. We were concerned to hear this language from *some* who in other instances have manifested a constancy and resolution which no confusion, nor ill aspect of public affairs could intimidate. —After all, is there any real foundation for these terrors? Is not this whole danger like the Lion of the slothful, the creature of our fears, and the excuse of indolence? Was it proposed to *make* articles, instead of *removing* them, there would be room for the objection. But it is obvious that Subscription to the 39 Articles might be altered or withdrawn, upon general principles of justice and expediency, without reviving one religious controversy; or calling into dispute a single proposition they contain. Who should excite disturbances?—Those who are relieved, will not: and unless Subscription were like a tax which being taken from one, must be laid with additional weight upon another, is it probable

bable that any will complain that they are oppressed, because their brethren are relieved? or that those who are so *strong in the faith* will refuse to *bear with the infirmities of the weak*? The few who upon principles of this sort opposed the application of the Dissenters, were repulsed from Parliament with disdain, even by those who were no friends to the application itself.

The Question concerning the object of worship is attended I confess with difficulty: It seems almost directly to divide the Worshippers. But let the Church pare down her excrescencies till she comes to this Question; let her discharge from her Liturgy Controversies unconnected with devotion; let her try what may be done for all sides by worshipping God in that generality * of expression, in which

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* If a Christian can think it an intolerable thing to worship one God through one Mediator *Jesus Christ*, in company with any such as differ from him in their notions about the metaphysical nature of

Christ;

he himself has left some points ; let her dismiss many of her Articles, and convert those which she retains into terms of Peace ; let her recall the terrors she has sus-

Christ, or of the *Holy Ghost*, or the like ; I am sorry for it. I remember the like objection made at the beginning of the Reformation by the *Lutherans* against the lawfulness of communicating with *Zuinglius*, and his followers ; because they had not the same notion with them of the elements in the Sacrament. And there was the same objection once against holding communion with any such as had not the same notions with themselves about the secret decrees of God relating to the Predestination and Reprobation of particular persons. But whatever those men may please themselves with thinking, who are sure they are arrived at the perfect knowledge of the most abstruse points, this they may be certain of, that in the present state of the Church, even supposing only such as are accounted orthodox to be joined together in one visible communion, they communicate together with a very great variety and confusion of notions, either comprehending nothing plain and distinct, or differing from one another as truly and as essentially as others differ from them all : nay with more certain difference with relation to the object of worship than if all prayers were directed (as Bishop *Bull* says, almost all were in the first ages) to God or the Father, through the Son. *Hoadly's Answer to Dr. Hare's Sermon.*

suspended over freedom of enquiry; let the Toleration she allows to Dissenters be made *absolute*; let her invite men to search the Scriptures; let her Governors encourage the studious and learned of all persuasions:—Let her do this—and she will be secure of the thanks of her own Clergy, and what is more, of their sincerity. A greater consent may grow out of enquiry than many at present are aware of, and the few who, after all, shall think it necessary to recede from our communion, will acknowledge the necessity to be inevitable; will respect the equity and moderation of the established Church, and live in peace with all its members.

I know not whether I ought to mention, among so many more serious reasons, that even the Governors of the Church themselves would find their ease and account in consenting to an Alteration.—For besides the difficulty of defending those decayed fortifications, and
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the indecency of deserting them, they either are, or will soon find themselves in the situation of a master of a family, whose servants know more of his secrets than it is proper for them to know, and whose whispers and whose threats must be bought off at an expence which will drain the *Apostolic Chamber* dry.

Having thus examined in their order, and as far as I understood them, the several answers * given by our Author to

* In his last note our Author breaks forth into *astonishment* and indignation, at the *folly, injustice and indecency* of comparing our Church to the Jewish in our Saviour's time, and even to the *Tower of Babel*. Mistaking the Church, in this last comparison, for one of her *Monuments* (which, indeed, with most people of his complexion, stands for the same thing) erected to prevent our dispersion from that grand centre of catholic dominion; or in the words of a late celebrated Castle-builder, *to keep us together*. If there be any *indecency* in such a comparison, it must be chargeable on those who lead us to it, by making use of the same terms with the original Architects, and to which the Author
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to the objections against the present mode of Subscription, it now remains, by way of summing up the evidence, to bring *forward* certain other Arguments contained in the Considerations, to which no answer has been attempted. It is contended then,

- I. That stating any doctrine in a Confession of Faith with a greater degree of *precision* than the Scriptures have done, is in effect to say, that the Scriptures have not stated it with *precision*

of the Considerations evidently alludes. This detached note is concluded with as detached, and no less curious an observation, which the Writer thinks may be a *sufficient answer* to the whole, namely, that the Author of the Considerations *has wrought no miracles for the conviction of the Answerer and his associates*. For what purpose this observation can be *sufficient*, it is not easy to guess, except it be designed to insinuate, what may perhaps really be the case, that no less than a miracle will serve to cast out that kind of spirit which has taken so full possession of them; or ever bring them to a sound mind, and a sincere love of truth.

cision enough; in other words, that the Scriptures are not sufficient.—
Mere declamation,

II. That this experiment of leaving men at liberty, and points of doctrine at large, has been attended with the improvement of religious knowledge, where and whenever it has been tried. And to this cause, so far as we can see, is owing the advantage which Protestant countries in this respect possess above their popish neighbours.—*No Answer.*

III. That keeping people out of churches, who might be admitted, consistently with every end of public worship, and excluding men from communion who desire to embrace it, upon the terms that God prescribes, is certainly not encouraging, but rather causing men to *forsake the assembling of themselves together.*—*No Answer.*

IV. That

IV. That men are deterred from searching the Scriptures by the fear of finding there more or less than they looked for; that is, something inconsistent with what they have already given their assent to, and must, at their peril abide by.—*No Answer.*

V. That it is not giving Truth a fair chance to decide points at one certain time, and by one set of men, which had much better be left to the successive enquiries of different ages and different persons.—*No Answer.*

VI. That it tends to multiply infidels amongst us, by exhibiting Christianity under a form, and in a system which many are disgusted with, who yet will not be at the pains to enquire after any other.—*No Answer.*

At the conclusion of his pamphlet our Author is pleased to acknowledge, what few, I find, care any longer to

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deny, that there are some things in our Articles and Liturgy which he should be glad to see amended, many which he should be willing to give up to the scruples of others, but that the heat and violence with which redress has been pursued, preclude all hope of accommodation and tranquillity—that we had better wait therefore for more peaceable times and be contented with our present constitution as it is, until a fairer prospect shall appear of changing it for the better.—

After returning thanks, in the name of the *Fraternity*, to him and to all who touch the burden of Subscription with but one of their fingers, I would wish to leave with them this observation, that as the Man who attacks a flourishing establishment writes with a halter round his neck, few ever will be found to attempt alterations but men of more spirit than prudence, of more sincerity than caution, of warm, eager, and impetuous tempers; that, consequently, if we are to wait for Improvement till the cool,

cool, the calm, the discreet part of mankind begin it, 'till Church Governors solicit, or Ministers of State propose it —I will venture to pronounce, that (without *his* interposition with whom nothing is impossible) we may remain as we are, 'till the *renovation of all things*.

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cool, the case, the direct part of man-
 kind begin in Hill Church. Governors
 of Ministers of State propose it
 will venture to pronounce that
 (without the intervention of whom
 nothing is impossible) we may remain
 as we are, till the resurrection of all
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